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REMARKS

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected Claims 1-18, which were all of the then pending claims, over the prior art, principally U.S. patent application publication no. 2002/0007324 (Centner, et al.). Specifically, Claims 1-5, 7-11 and 13-17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102 as being fully anticipated by Centner, et al; and Claims 6, 12 and 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 as being unpatentable over Centner, et al. in view of U.S. Patent 5,870,754 (McCune).

Independent Claims 1, 7 and 13 are being amended to better define the subject matters of these claims. Also, new Claim 19, which is dependent from Claim 1, is being added to describe preferred or optional features of the preferred embodiment of the invention.

For the reasons set forth below, Claims 1-19 patentably distinguish over the prior art and are allowable. The Examiner is thus asked to reconsider and to withdraw the rejection of Claims 1-5, 7-11 and 13-17 under 35 U.S.C. 102 and the rejection of Claims 6, 12 and 18 under 35 U.S.C. 103, and to allow Claims 1-19.

Generally, Claims 1-19 patentably distinguish over the prior art because the prior art does not disclose or suggest electronically recalculating an electronic list of approvers to change the names of the approvers on the list, as described in independent Claims 1, 7 and 13.

The instant invention, generally, relates to an approval process in an electronic requisitioning system. As discussed in the present application, businesses are beginning to use electronic requisition systems more and more. One basic aspect of many requisition systems is the approval, usually internal of the business, of a proposal for a requisition.

While current electronic requisition systems offer important advantages, they also have limitations. One limitation is that there may be lengthy delays before all the approvals are obtained, especially if one or more of the approvers are not available for several days or longer.

The present invention effectively addresses this issue. Generally, this is done by providing an electronic requisitioning system including an electronic list of approvers that are recalculated to take into account the availability of the approvers.

More specifically, with the preferred embodiment of the invention, an electronic requisition form is prepared including a proposal for a requisition. This proposal requires approval by each of a plurality of approvers. An electronic list is established of the approvers for the proposal; and at defined time, this list is electronically recalculated to change the names of the approvers on the list.

Centner, et al, the primary reference relied on by the Examiner to reject the claims, discloses a Web-based server that facilitates communications and commercial transactions between buyers and suppliers. In the disclosed procedure, a buyer initiates a request for quotation or a request for proposal, and a group of possible suppliers are notified of that request. These suppliers can bid on the request, and one supplier may be selected to provide the requested products or services.

The procedure described in Centner, et al. has several special features. For instance, the bidding process may be conducted in various ways, and the bidding suppliers may be notified of each other's bids. An electronic database of preferred suppliers may be maintained, and much of the communications between the buyers and possible suppliers is done electronically.

There is an important general difference between the present invention and the procedure described in Centner, et al. Specifically, Centner, et al. is directed to communications between buyers and sellers, while the present invention is directed to the process for approving a proposal for a requisition.

This general difference between the present invention and the procedure described in Centner, et al. is reflected in a number of more specific differences. For example, with the present invention, the proposal for the requisition needs to be approved by a plurality of approvers. This is not the case with the request described in Centner, et al. With the request procedure of Centner, et al, all the buyer needs is one supplier. Also, with the present invention, the electronic list of approvers is electronically recalculated, at defined times, to change the names of the approvers on the list. Centner, et al does not involve any similar change in the names of the approvers.

This latter feature of the present invention is of significant utility because it enables the person who is submitting the proposal to keep track of the names of the approvers in case the approvers change. If these names change — which might occur, for example, if one approver is away for several days and a substitute takes his or her place — the person making the proposal is kept informed as to who specifically needs to approve the proposal. That person who submits the proposal is thus better able to follow through with the proposal to be sure that it is processed timely.

The other references of record have been reviewed, and these other references, whether considered individually or in combination, also do not disclose or suggest this feature of the present invention.

For instance, McCune describes a process for automatically tracking requests; and in this process, messages may be sent to various users. McCune was cited principally for its disclosure of sending reminder notices to act on a proposal for a requisition, and McCune does not disclose or suggest the above-discussed feature of electronically recalculating the list of approvers at defined times to change the names of the approvers on that list.

Independent Claims 1, 7 and 13, as presented herewith, describe this feature of the present invention. In particular, Claims 1 and 13 describe the steps of establishing an electronic list of the approvers for the proposal for the requisition; and at defined times, electronically recalculating the list to change the names of the approvers on the list.

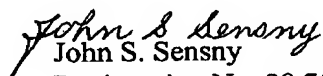
Claim 7 is directed to an electronic requisition processing system, and this claim describes analogous system features. Specifically, Claim 7 sets forth means for establishing an electronic list of the approvers for the proposal for the requisition, and means for electronically recalculating the list at defined times to change the names of the approvers on the list.

Because of the above-discussed differences between Claims 1, 7 and 13 and the prior art, and because of the advantages associated with those differences, these Claims 1, 7 and 13 patentably distinguish over the prior art and are allowable. Claims 2-6 and 19 are dependent from Claim 1 and are allowable therewith. Likewise, Claims 8-12 are dependent from Claim 7 and are allowable therewith; and Claims 14-18 are dependent from, and are allowable with, Claim 13.

The Examiner is, accordingly, respectfully requested to reconsider and to withdraw the rejection of Claims 1-5, 7-11 and 13-17 under 35 U.S.C. 102 and the rejection of Claims 6, 12 and 18 under 35 U.S.C. 103, and to allow Claims 1-19.

If the Examiner believes that a telephone conference with Applicants' Attorneys would be advantageous to the disposition of this case, the Examiner is asked to telephone the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,


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